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Security Council

Sixty-first year

Provisional

5359th meeting

Friday, 27 January 2006, 10 a.m.

New York

President:	Ms. Migiro	(United Republic of Tanzania)
Members:	Argentina	Mr. D'Alotto
	China	Mr. Wang Guangya
	Congo	Mr. Adada
	Denmark	Ms. Løj
	France	Mr. De La Sablière
	Ghana	Nana Effah-Apenteng
	Greece	Mr. Vassilakis
	Japan	Mr. Oshima
	Peru	Mr. De Rivero
	Qatar	Mr. Al-Mahmoud
	Russian Federation	Mr. Denisov
	Slovakia	Mr. Burian
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Emyr Jones Parry
	United States of America	Mr. Yamamoto

Agenda

The situation in the Great Lakes region

Peace, security and development in the Great Lakes region

Letter dated 18 January 2006 from the Permanent Representative of the United Republic of Tanzania to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2006/27)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A.

06-22513 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Great Lakes region

Peace, security and development in the Great Lakes region

Letter dated 18 January 2006 from the Permanent Representative of the United Republic of Tanzania to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2006/27)

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Algeria, Angola, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Botswana, Brazil, Burundi, Cameroon, Canada, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, Guatemala, Kenya, Namibia, the Netherlands, Nigeria, Norway, Pakistan, the Republic of Korea, Rwanda, Senegal, South Africa, the Sudan, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe in which they request to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the consideration without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

It is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, the representatives of the aforementioned countries took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President: I am pleased to acknowledge the participation at this meeting of a number of ministers: Mr. Karel De Gucht of Belgium, The Honourable Lieutenant General Mompati S. Merafhe of Botswana, Madame Antoinette Batumubwira of Burundi, Mr. Rodolphe Adada of the Congo, Mr. Raymond Baya Ramazani of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mr. Raphael Tuju of Kenya, Mr. Marco Hausiku of Namibia, Mr. Ahmad bin Abdullah Al-Mahmoud of Qatar, Mr. Lam Akol Ajawin of the Sudan, Mr. Sam K. Kutesa of Uganda, Lieutenant General Reverend Ronnie S. Shikapwasha, M.P., of Zambia, Mr. Simbarashe S. Mumbengegwi of Zimbabwe, and Mr. Georges Rebelo Chicoti, Deputy Minister for External Relations of Angola.

On behalf of the Security Council, I extend a warm welcome to each of them.

In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Ibrahima Fall, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region.

It is so decided.

I invite Mr. Ibrahima Fall to take the seat reserved for him at the side of the Council Chamber.

I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter dated 25 January 2006 from the Chargé d'affaires of the Permanent Mission of the Congo to the United Nations requesting that Mr. Said Djinnit, Commissioner for Peace and Security of the African Union, be invited to participate in the meeting under rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure. If I hear no objection, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Djinnit.

It is so decided.

I invite Mr. Djinnit to take the seat reserved for him at the side of the Council Chamber.

In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Louis Michel, Commissioner for Development and Humanitarian Aid of the European Commission.

It is so decided.

I invite Mr. Louis Michel to take the seat reserved for him at the side of the Council Chamber.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

Members of the Council have before them the report of the Secretary-General on the preparations for the International Conference on the Great Lakes region, document S/2006/46.

Members of the Council also have before them document S/2006/51, which contains the text of a draft resolution prepared in the course of the Council's prior consultations. I should like to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2006/27, which contains the text of a letter dated 18 January 2006 from the Permanent Representative of the United Republic of Tanzania to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General.

In accordance with the understanding reached among Council members, I wish to remind all speakers to limit their statements to no more than five minutes in order to enable the Council to carry out its work expeditiously.

As another measure to optimize the use of our time in order to allow as many delegations to take the floor as possible, I will not individually invite speakers to take seats at the table and invite them to resume their seats on the side. When a speaker is taking the floor, the Conference Officer will seat the next speaker on the list at the table.

With the agreement of the members, I will give the floor to a number of Security Council members, and then to a number of non-Council members, until the list of speakers is exhausted.

I am now pleased to welcome participants to this historic meeting on peace, security and development in the Great Lakes region under the presidency of my country, the United Republic of Tanzania. It is my singular honour and privilege to lead this open debate.

We are meeting here today to refocus world attention and our thinking on ways and strategies to prevent and resolve recurrent conflicts in the Great Lakes region. Our shared vision has been to create a region where lasting peace and stability would prevail and allow for sustainable development.

The Great Lakes region peace process is an initiative of countries of the region with the support of the United Nations, the African Union and the Group of Friends of the Great Lakes Region. The initiative is embodied in the Dar es-Salaam Declaration, adopted at the end of the first International Conference on Peace, Security, Democracy and Development in the Great Lakes Region, held in Dar es-Salaam in November 2004. The Declaration is a foundation upon which countries of the region seek to build a framework for realizing enduring peace, democratic governance and respect for human rights, economic cooperation and sustainable development.

The 1994 genocide in Rwanda will remain a painful reminder of our collective failure to stop it. On the other hand, the genocide unveiled deficiencies in the societal moral fabric. It should never happen again. The violent conflicts, human displacements and refugee influxes that have plagued our region in the past decades have adversely affected all of us. We therefore have to work together to avoid a repeat of such catastrophes and create a better future for our people. We need collective political will to prevent and resolve conflicts, consolidate peace and build institutions of democratic governance based on the rule of law and respect for human rights. Peace is a necessary prerequisite for development, and, in turn, development reinforces political stability and underlies socio-economic prosperity. We must strive to attain and uphold those ideals.

For us, the countries of the region, the Security Council is our key partner in promoting and maintaining peace and security in our region. We appreciate the response and initiatives of the Council to work with us. Nevertheless, we are still facing residual and new challenges. We therefore need to consolidate what we have achieved so far and mobilize the support of the international community in accomplishing our objectives. The newly established Peacebuilding Commission should focus its early attention on the countries of the region as we create the necessary political environment for irreversible peace.

We in the region want to assure the Security Council and other members of the international community of our collective political determination to make the Great Lakes process a practical accomplishment. We are working at national and regional levels to create mechanisms to strengthen mutual confidence and trust as a basis for peace and stability in the region. In that regard, we are committed to developing arrangements that will deepen cooperation and sustain peace and security. Similarly, we have embraced democracy and good governance not only as intrinsic values but also as necessary for our peaceful coexistence and crucial for our development. The desirability of a regional approach in this endeavour cannot be overemphasized. At the next Summit, in Nairobi, we should be able to codify and adopt these undertakings.

The work of the United Nations Office in Nairobi was pivotal in preparing for the first Summit and will be equally so for the upcoming Summit. We need the support of the Office and of our friends in sustaining the process leading to the Nairobi Summit and its follow-up.

In conclusion, I wish to say on behalf of the United Republic of Tanzania that Tanzania pledges to continue working closely with the Security Council and the Secretary-General in implementing the current mandate of the Council in the Great Lakes region. Together, we should be able to evolve future initiatives that will consolidate international peace and security in our region.

I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Congo, His Excellency Mr. Rodolphe Adada.

Mr. Adada (Congo) (*spoke in French*): First of all, Madam President, I would like to say how proud we are to see the United Republic of Tanzania presiding over the Security Council in January 2006, when a number of particularly sensitive African issues are receiving priority. Today's meeting gives us another opportunity to express our appreciation for Tanzania's role in building an Africa that is free and united, peaceful, prosperous and confident in its future.

It is no coincidence that, for many years, the Organization for African Unity (OAU) Liberation Committee had its headquarters in Dar es-Salaam, which caused the Ugandan head of State, His Excellency Mr. Yoweri Museveni, to say at the first Summit of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, held in Dar es-Salaam, that Tanzania was the Mecca of freedom fighters in Africa.

My delegation therefore welcomes today's debate on a question that encompasses the full scope of issues on the future of our continent in the areas of peace, security, democracy, good governance, good-neighbourliness, development, regional integration and international cooperation.

During last September's world summit, the head of the Congolese State, His Excellency Mr. Denis Sassou Nguesso, recalled the importance and the relevance of the appeal contained in the Dar es-Salaam Declaration on the Great Lakes region, which must be recognized as a special area of development and reconstruction. Like any other integration project, it is a vast construction site and a long and complex process that must be conducted in stages.

Looking at the ongoing developments, we can say today that significant progress on peace and security is being made in our region. In Burundi, the transition has led to the organization of democratic, free and transparent elections, after which new institutions were established. The security situation has improved considerably, and the process of national reconciliation is continuing.

The political transition in the Democratic Republic of the Congo brought about by the Pretoria Agreement is moving along favourably following the organization of the constitutional referendum. We encourage all parties in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to work tirelessly in the context of this peaceful, inclusive transition, so that after 30 June 2006, the country will rediscover peace and stability. But we must first do everything we can to prevent the armed groups that are operating in the eastern part of the country from jeopardizing the ongoing process. We must also encourage the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Uganda to use all existing mechanisms of tripartite cooperation and verification to pursue their efforts to ease tension and to establish relations of trust in the region. That would undoubtedly contribute to resolve such problems as the illicit circulation of small arms and light weapons; refugees and displaced persons; the presence of armed groups on the territory of neighbouring States; and the illegal exploitation of natural resources.

It is in this spirit of mutual trust that, in cooperation with the authorities of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), my Government has undertaken the voluntary repatriation of Rwandan refugees and elements of the former armed forces of Zaire to their countries of origin. But, as the High Commissioner for Refugees observed during the Council's debate on 24 January 2006 (see S/PV.5353), the return of refugees and displaced persons is closely linked to support from the international community for economic recovery and peacebuilding in the countries concerned.

A similarly positive development took place in the Central African Republic after the elections that led to the establishment of new democratic institutions. We need to confront the insecurity and consolidate the

social process, a task to which the international community, beginning with the neighbouring countries, members of the Central African Economic and Monetary Community, is working relentlessly.

In the light of these favourable developments, I reaffirm today the commitment of our countries to promote regional integration, based on a common vision of our interests in the areas of peace, security, the rule of law, democracy, good governance and human rights. Increasingly, those concerns and those values are finding their place in the policies of our States. The missions that the Security Council regularly dispatches to the region have taken note of this progress. So, I would like to say to Council members and to the entire international community that there should be no mistaking the degree of our commitment to building an integrated political and economic space in the Great Lakes region.

The postponement of the second Summit, which was caused solely by timetable constraints in a number of countries, does not signal any slackening or lack of interest. On the contrary, the postponement has allowed us to better prepare ourselves to address, with greater objectivity and determination, the issues on the second Summit agenda. The common thinking among our countries, with the participation of all segments of societies — the non-governmental organizations, civil society, women, young people and others — with a view to the speedy adoption of the proposed regional Security, Stability and Development Pact, is an encouraging sign, which clearly indicates where we wish to go and where we wish to extend our efforts.

We want to gain peace and development through a comprehensive and integrated approach. That lies at the heart of the second Summit of the International Conference. The adoption of the proposed Security, Stability and Development Pact would enable us to give real content to our common vision; to promote, consolidate and implement our cooperation; to provide a formal framework for our political consultations, which will become regular; and to create the momentum necessary for the harmonious development of our countries.

Madam President, I would like once again to thank you for having given us an opportunity to tell our partners that the flame lit in Dar es-Salaam in November 2004 continues to illuminate our path and will not be extinguished on such a worthy path. The old images of people fleeing Rwanda or Burundi on foot to take refuge in Brazzaville, Gabon or Cameroon are enough to remind us of the horror of armed conflict. They also remind us that our geographic and human space is one. It is up to us to transform it into an integrated political and economic space.

This is what is at stake, and I have come here to reaffirm that we are working on a daily basis for the stabilization of the situation in our region and that we continue to count on our partners to continue this battle. We need to consolidate our gains to avoid backsliding. In that respect, the Peacebuilding Commission recently established by the United Nations may find a vast proving ground in our region, particularly in Burundi and later on in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Finally, at a time of active preparation for the second summit of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, I welcome the Security Council's initiatives for peace and stability in our region, encourage our partners not to lose patience and to continue to provide their crucial assistance throughout the process, and openly profess our full commitment. With the individual and collective concerted efforts of the countries concerned, from the African Union, the United Nations, the development partners and the entire international community, we will succeed in building a zone of peace and prosperity in the heart of Africa, commensurate with our immense human and natural potential.

The President: I give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, His Excellency Mr. Raymond Ramazani Baya.

Mr. Ramazani Baya (Democratic Republic of the Congo) (*spoke in French*): As I address this plenary meeting of the Security Council, allow me to extend my congratulations and encouragement to your country, Madam, and, like the representative who spoke before me, to highlight the outstanding role played by the United Republic of Tanzania in the search for solutions to the conflicts in the Great Lakes region.

I also wish to express the great appreciation of the Democratic Republic of the Congo for the initiative taken by you and the Security Council in organizing this special meeting on peace, security and development in the Great Lakes region. We thank the United Nations for its sustained interest and efforts to

transform the Great Lakes region into a true community in which confrontation, mistrust, fear and hatred will give way to peace, trust, solidarity, security, democracy and development.

Through various follow-up and monitoring mechanisms and the implementation of resolutions and recommendations that have led to numerous meetings on the Great Lakes region — culminating in the Dar es-Salaam Declaration of 20 November 2004 — we can say most assuredly that a new awareness is gradually developing in the region. We welcome the partnership that has been established between the Great Lakes States and the international community to find a new way of living together in our region. That positive development is due, in part, to the initiatives of the Secretary-General of the United Nations and his Special Representative, Mr. Ibrahima Fall, whose work we welcome and support.

That momentum is based on the hope for a new regional security order, greater economic and commercial integration, democracy and good governance, stabilization and improved collective management of social and humanitarian problems. The new understanding is to be crowned by the signing this year of a regional pact for stability, security and development, but we still have a long way to go. Much remains to be done, everyone must contribute and each of our countries must adapt internally and to the rules of the new peaceful coexistence among States. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, considerable progress has been made in meeting the commitments we have undertaken to establish a new domestic political order and to normalize relations with neighbouring States.

The electoral process has now reached cruising speed. Some 25 million citizens have been identified and registered as voters to participate in the general elections to be held by June this year. On 18 and 19 December 2005, the Independent Electoral Commission organized a constitutional referendum throughout the national territory. The Congolese people voted overwhelmingly and in accordance with democratic norms in favour of the draft constitution.

To mark national reconciliation following the trauma and upheavals caused by years of war, the President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mr. Joseph Kabila, following its adoption by Parliament, on 19 December 2005 enacted a law providing amnesty for acts of war, political infractions and crimes of dissent. The electoral law has been under discussion this month and will be adopted by the two chambers of Parliament in the near future. The path is now open for the holding of transparent, democratic and free elections.

On another front, and in accordance with commitments undertaken by the Democratic Republic of the Congo, we are focusing on strengthening our domestic security. With the support of the international community, we have concluded the initial phase of *brassage* for troops from the various warring factions in order to create a restructured and integrated army. Six integrated brigades are now ready to go to work. The second phase of *brassage* has begun and will result in the training of six additional brigades by the end of February. By the time the elections are held, the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (FARDC) will have 18 integrated brigades. We understand that the *brassage* of troops is a long and slow process and must be pursued long after the elections are held. I would point out, moreover, that similar *brassage* and integration operations have been undertaken for our country's national police, which now have professional and well-trained units to maintain order and ensure the security of goods and persons.

The Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo understands that, without significantly improved living conditions for the military and the police, it will be unable to strengthen security. Action has therefore been taken to make salary payment mechanisms more efficient and transparent. They are no longer under the army's chain of command. The Government has decided to implement the guidelines on peace and the distribution of rations to the military drafted by experts of the European Union mission to provide advice and assistance for security sector reform. That series of provisions will improve the functioning of the army and the police and enable us to guarantee security in the forthcoming electoral operations.

In Ituri, the FARDC, in cooperation with troops from the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC), have successfully launched operations to neutralize the Congolese militias that remain active in a few pockets of resistance in the Mahagi and Djugu territories.

In tandem with security operations for the internal political process, the Democratic Republic of the Congo has also acted in fulfilment of its commitments to ensuring its neighbours' security. I note the establishment in Beni, in North Kivu, of an office of the Ugandan amnesty commission in order to facilitate the return to Uganda of Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) and National Movement for the Liberation of Uganda (NALU) combatants. In December 2005, faced with the refusal of the ADF and NALU forces to respond to the appeal for voluntary repatriation through the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme organized by our Government, the Congolese armed forces, with the support of MONUC, dismantled their positions in the North-East Beni communities of Benim-Mbau, Watalinga and Ruwenzori, and in the Bashu community in South-West Beni. A cache of arms and communications equipment was collected and the FARDC took more than 40 combatants prisoner.

In August and September 2005, in South Kivu province, 200 combatants of the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR), under the command of Colonel Amani, laid down their weapons and were repatriated to Rwanda. In the first two weeks of December 2005, at the initiative of the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, 149 additional FDLR combatants led by Colonel Amani were repatriated to Rwanda, with the assistance of MONUC. Since the beginning of the year, 150 FDLR combatants and civilians have been regrouped in the Mulengwe camp with a view to repatriation.

In North Kivu, dismantling operations were about to begin when the political/military leadership of the FDLR requested a delay in order to set an agreement on modalities for repatriating FDLR elements and ex-combatants and their dependants.

I would point out that, within the framework of the Tripartite Plus One Commission that unites Uganda, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda, as well as Burundi, a unit for the collection and dissemination of information has been set up in Kisangani, where shelters are ready.

I cannot close this chapter on security without referring to the most recent events in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. On Monday, 23 January, eight Blue Helmets from Guatemala were killed in an ambush in the Garamba Park in the Upper Uélé, in the Eastern Province, when MONUC forces carrying out search operations encountered some of the armed groups that are still active in that part of the country.

The Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo once again extends its heartfelt condolences to the Government of Guatemala, to MONUC and to the families of those soldiers who fell on the field of honour serving peace and security in the Congo and in the Great Lakes region. That tragedy gives our Government the opportunity to once again welcome the commitment of MONUC in actions to make that province safer, side by side with the Congolese armed forces.

That unfortunate event is painful proof that MONUC and the Democratic Republic of the Congo are doing everything they can to end the presence of all armed groups on Congolese soil. We must point out that, unfortunately, those armed groups still have some capacity to cause harm and could again bring about a tragedy like that we mourn today, with the death of the eight Guatemalan Blue Helmets.

Far from discouraging us, that sort of tragedy can only further strengthen our determination to eradicate all the armed groups creating insecurity along the eastern border of our country. The Democratic Republic of the Congo will spare no effort to identify those responsible and to bring them to justice.

Another regrettable event took place during military skirmishes in North Kivu, in the territory of Rutshuru, in mid-January. Thanks to the rapid intervention of the coalition forces of the FARDC and MONUC, calm has been restored. Without doubt, we must welcome the cooperation existing today between MONUC and the FARDC, and their growing capacity to respond more rapidly to such situations.

Our Government welcomed the publication on 1 November 2005, by the Security Council committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004) on the Democratic Republic of the Congo, of a list of persons and entities subject to sanctions for violating the arms embargo in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It also welcomed resolution 1649 (2005), adopted on 21 December 2005, which provides for the implementation through 31 July 2006 of individual sanctions against those responsible for the armed groups, and which prohibits countries neighbouring the Democratic Republic of the Congo from illegally exploiting the natural resources of our country. Our

hope is that those resolutions will be strictly implemented in order to discourage any attempt to disrupt the transition process taking place in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Although we are aware of the improvement in relations with neighbouring States, our Government nonetheless deplores the fact that cooperation remains insufficient and permits some of those States to continue to harbour criminals whose extradition the Democratic Republic of the Congo had requested, in accordance with relevant Security Council resolutions and decisions taken during other, regional meetings. Here we wish once again to request the Security Council to exert further pressure on those States to cease, if not their support to the militias, then at least the understanding and tolerance shown to them.

We welcome the establishment by the United Nations, on 20 December 2005, of the Peacebuilding Commission. Our hope is that the Democratic Republic of the Congo will be one of the first and one of the main beneficiaries.

On 19 December 2005, a page of history was turned in the Great Lakes region with the ruling by the International Court of Justice in The Hague condemning Uganda for military acts against the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Our Government welcomes that judgment. Can true reconciliation be established if we do not mention the evil, if we do not recognize the errors committed, if we do not shoulder our responsibilities and if we do not right the wrongs? We therefore believe that judicial decision, rather than interfering in the momentum of the new relations between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda, will instead place our future relations under the light of the law, and no longer under the influence of force and weapons.

Concerning development — also one of the main themes of the present meeting — let me point out that the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo have paid a heavy toll for the conflicts that have troubled the Great Lakes region — as noted, among others, by the ruling of the International Court of Justice. Thus, the main victims should be the main beneficiaries in the reconstruction efforts in the Great Lakes region. Our people must clearly see what the end of the wars, and the negotiations in the region among the countries of the region and with the international community, have brought them.

Therefore we reaffirm our hope that the humanitarian and economic problems will be taken into consideration in the framework of the fund for regional reconstruction that has been discussed since Dar es-Salaam and that should be implemented from the perspective of the proposed Stability, Security and Development Pact.

We are aware that the signing of that fundamental act is of concern to all States in the region, as well as to our partners. The deferral of the timeline has been justified. Many countries in the region, in particular Burundi, Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, were occupied with carrying out their internal electoral processes.

Our Government, taking account of the crucial time we are going through with the organization of an historic election, after almost 40 years, does not see the possibility of preparing for a summit, even if it is held next June or July. We believe the summit for the signing of the Pact should take place at the beginning of September 2006. The Congolese delegation can then legitimately be present and can commit itself with other States of the Great Lakes region in that ambitious project to create a zone of peace, understanding, cooperation and economic integration from the Atlantic Ocean to the Indian Ocean. Until then, we must maintain contact through meetings of this type, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo commits itself to be present.

In conclusion, we reaffirm the determination of our Government to pursue the peace and stability process in the Great Lakes region to the end. The Democratic Republic of the Congo renews its commitment to participate in establishing conditions of peace and security for its people and for the fraternal peoples of neighbouring States.

As our people prepare to enter fully into the delicate and crucial period of the voting process to choose the future leaders of our country's institutions, we expect of all the neighbouring States an attitude of active solidarity so that no outside threat of any kind will disrupt that process.

We reiterate our gratitude to the international community for the attention and sustained efforts in the birth of a new era of relations of trust, security and mutual benefit for the States of the Great Lakes region. That is something that not only the people of the region wholeheartedly wish, but the people of the entire continent as well.

The President: I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Namibia, His Excellency Mr. Marco Hausiku.

Mr. Hausiku (Namibia): It is a great honour for me and my delegation to participate in this important meeting of the Security Council. At the outset, allow me to extend to you, Madam President, our congratulations on your assumption of the presidency of the Council for January 2006. We are confident that your able leadership and diplomatic skills will ensure success in the work ahead, and I would like to assure you of my delegation's support and cooperation during your tenure.

We are delighted, Madam, that you and other members of the Council have organized this debate on peace, security and development in the Great Lakes region. That demonstrates that the Security Council continues to devote most of its programme of work to issues related to peace, security and development, particularly in Africa. You have once again shown your commitment, and that of your country, Tanzania, to resolving one of Africa's most pressing problems by bringing the issue to the Council's attention early in the year.

We thank you, Madam, for the non-paper that you have circulated, which is the basis of our discussions today, and hope that it will result in the Council's making informed decisions on the matter.

Namibia attaches great importance to the security situation in the Great Lakes region, not only because the people of that region have suffered for too long from conflict and its consequences, but also because the absence of peace in that region negatively affects the rest of the African continent. The situation also continues to pose a threat to international peace and security. We are confident that participation in this debate at the ministerial level will give great impetus to the Council's deliberations.

We are cognizant of the fact that a conflict affecting one country can rapidly engulf the entire region because of the social, economic and cultural links that exist among our people. The current trend of conflict and the complexity thereof has consistently dictated the need for concerted efforts by all stakeholders involved in finding durable peace and security, which in turn paves the way for sustainable economic development.

While there has been commendable progress in the region, such as the holding of democratic elections in Burundi and the referendum in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, continuing instability in other parts of the region undermines peace efforts in the Great Lakes region.

The presence of militia and foreign armed groups in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo has created a deplorable situation that threatens the civilian population and increases the widespread violations of human rights and international humanitarian law. The situation thus requires the cooperation of the African Union (AU) countries of the Great Lakes region. Bilateral and regional initiatives focusing on confidence-building measures should be encouraged. We urge the countries of the region to strengthen bilateral cooperation and commit themselves fully to the effective implementation of the African Union Non-Aggression and Common Defence Pact, adopted in Abuja on 31 January 2005, as a regional security mechanism for conflict prevention, management and peaceful settlement of disputes.

The process of demobilization, disarmament, repatriation and reintegration in that part of the region can be successfully carried out only through the cooperation of all of the countries in the region. We therefore reiterate our support for resolution 1649 (2005) and call for its full and urgent implementation.

Furthermore, efforts should be made by the neighbouring countries to reach a comprehensive agreement aimed at a long-term strategy for sustainable peace and development and mutual understanding among the countries of the region, thereby ensuring that the region is transformed into one of peace and security, where political and social stability, economic development and regional integration, as well as democracy and social justice, prevail.

We fully recognize the primary responsibility of the Security Council for the maintenance of international peace and security as mandated by the United Nations Charter. At the same time, we also acknowledge the role played by regional and subregional organizations in finding durable peace in the region.

The AU, for its part, has consistently maintained that security is a sine qua non for development; hence, the establishment of the African Union peace and security organ, with the sole purpose of dealing with conflict prevention and resolution and peacekeeping in Africa. In this regard, we call for the speedy

implementation of resolution 1631 (2005), which urges international organizations to contribute to the strengthening of the capacity of African regional and subregional organizations.

Women and children suffer the most during conflict. In that connection, we strongly believe that in order to achieve a comprehensive and sustainable peace, every effort should be made to ensure the full participation and contribution of women during peace negotiations and during the execution of post-conflict strategies and programmes. In this regard, we reiterate our commitment to the full and effective implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security.

The first International Conference on Peace and Security, Democracy and Development in the Great Lakes Region, held in Dar es-Salaam from 19 to 20 November 2004, provided an opportunity for the countries of the region to devise effective ways and means of finding durable solutions to the problems facing the region. Namibia regrets the postponement of the second International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, which was scheduled to take place in Nairobi in November last year, and hopes that such a conference will be convened in the near future.

During the 2005 world summit, our leaders took important decisions, which provided an impressive agenda for the reform and strengthening of our Organization so as to enable it to meet the challenges that we face today. The Summit Outcome document mandated the General Assembly to finalize and continue to deliberate on issues, including the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission, which was operationalized by the General Assembly and the Security Council through resolution 60/180 and resolution 1645 (2005), respectively. We commend your delegation, Madam President, and that of Denmark, for the effective leadership during the difficult negotiations. We look forward to the contribution of the Peacebuilding Commission to the achievement of durable peace and sustainable development in the Great Lakes region.

The international community should therefore be encouraged to continue to support the people of Africa in their quest for sustainable peace and development. In this context, we welcome the Secretary-General's proposal to support the 10-year capacity-building plan for the African Union, as outlined in his report on the implementation of the recommendations of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations, contained in document A/60/640.

Finally, my delegation supports the draft resolution on peace, security and development in the Great Lakes region, and calls for its adoption by the Security Council.

The President: I give the floor to The Honourable Lieutenant General Mompati S. Merafhe, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Botswana.

Mr. Merafhe (Botswana): I am delighted to congratulate you, Madam President, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of January. I am particularly pleased to extend our commendation to your country, the United Republic of Tanzania, and its people for the successful election held during the last month of 2005.

Over the years, Tanzania has demonstrated political vision. It led the way in the transformation of African political systems when it ended one-party rule, introduced multi-party elections and brought about a constitutional provision for presidential term limitation and the peaceful transfer of power. For the third consecutive time, it has shown how power can be transferred democratically, smoothly and peacefully. We are grateful to Tanzania for its admirable and exemplary leadership.

Recent developments in Tanzania are relevant to the subject of this open debate on peace, security, democracy and development in the Great Lakes region of Africa. The right of people to exercise their sovereign will in deciding on the nature of institutions that govern their affairs on the basis of consent is central to the question of peace and development. We therefore welcome the deliberations of the Security Council on the Great Lakes region — a region of Africa whose people have experienced some of the worst forms of atrocities in recent history.

This debate is taking place a few weeks after the Peacebuilding Commission was put in place. We welcome the establishment of the Commission and, once again, are deeply grateful to your delegation, Madam President, for the pivotal role it played in the negotiations that produced a resolution that enjoyed broad support.

We look forward to the constructive and practical work of the Peacebuilding Commission in helping

countries emerging from conflict to manage the difficult and painful process of reconstruction, national reconciliation and development. It is our hope and expectation that the Commission will adopt an effective, timeous and action-oriented approach to post-conflict peacebuilding. The work of the Commission should be inclusive, transparent and measurable; that is the only reason for its existence.

While we welcome without reservation the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission, let us never forget that when the United Nations was established 60 years ago, the founders declared their determination to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war. Today, 191 countries have freely committed themselves to the noble and great enterprise of ending war. Our business as Member States is to put the business of making war out of business by enhancing the capacity of the United Nations to prevent the outbreak of conflicts and to manage and resolve disputes. It is deeply regrettable that we have not always succeeded in doing that.

The Security Council has the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, but we recognize that in the final analysis, every State has the ultimate responsibility for establishing institutions that can ensure peace and stability within its borders. We have come here because we have abiding faith in the instrumentality of the Council to play an effective role in the search for peace and stability in the Great Lakes region.

If the Security Council has been actively seized of the situation in the Great Lakes region for several years, 2006 should be the year in which we can expect to see increased determination to move from dialogue to action. The Dar es-Salaam Declaration of November 2004 has already established a solid foundation for negotiations on the four themes of peace and security, democracy and good governance, economic development and regional integration, and humanitarian and social issues.

The Great Lakes region is one of the African regions that are richly endowed with natural resources, fertile soils, good rains and, above all, industrious and enterprising people. It is the cradle of human civilization, and many people in Africa trace their origins to this area, which is at the heart of the African continent. And yet it is here that we witnessed one of the worst forms of man's inhumanity to man. It is therefore in the interests of the Great Lakes region, Africa and the wider international community that this area be helped to emerge from violent conflicts and human suffering to embrace peace and stability and engage in economic cooperation, regional integration and development.

There can be no doubt that the Great Lakes region has great potential for development and economic prosperity if only peace can be given a chance. The restoration of peace in the region should also have a positive impact on the prospects for economic growth and development in the Southern African Development Community region and, indeed, in Africa as a whole. It would open up greater opportunities for the implementation of the New Partnership for Africa's Development.

The people of the Great Lakes region expect to live in peace. Peace is indivisible. We wish for the people of the region the peace, stability and security that the rest of humanity enjoys and sometimes inadvertently takes for granted because it is as natural as breathing. It is only under conditions of peace and stability that, together, we can devote our resources and energies to improving the human condition and attain the Millennium Development Goals. The immediate beneficiaries of a comprehensive peace agreement would be the people of the Great Lakes region themselves, who have borne the brunt of untold human suffering. Any further delay in achieving durable peace in the region can only condemn all of us in Africa to economic stagnation and the vicious circle of violence and crises.

There can be no doubt that the people of this area have a common history and a shared future. It is in that context that we call upon the militia groups that have so far refused to join the peace process and continued to be a source of instability and mayhem to voluntarily disarm and join the movement towards peace. That they can do by agreeing to live under and participate in an alternative order based on tolerance, consensus, compromise and democracy.

The time has come for the Security Council to send a clear message to the militias that it can no longer tolerate continued defiance of the collective will of the international community. In that regard, we commend the recent joint military action by the Government and the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to disarm militias in that country.

The international community has a crucial role to play in facilitating the development of the will to peace in order to help usher in a new political dispensation in this troubled area. Given the area's violent history, the people of the Great Lakes need assurances that entering into agreements on the governance issues outlined in the Dar es-Salaam Declaration would not be tantamount to surrendering their own security and that of generations yet unborn. They should be encouraged to see these governance issues as underpinning durable peace, embracing good-neighbourliness and peaceful coexistence in exchange for a larger share of expanded opportunities in a larger region.

The international community must demonstrate a readiness to support a comprehensive peace agreement by providing resources to underpin such an agreement. That means providing financial, material and technical resources for the resettlement of returning refugees and internally displaced persons, the reintegration of former combatants and the provision of education, health care, potable water and, above all, assistance in building and strengthening institutions.

Consistent and assured support in the rehabilitation of infrastructure and the reactivation of the economies of the region's countries should go a long way towards reinforcing the process of economic cooperation and regional integration. A comprehensive package of assistance would be the greatest peace dividend that the international community could provide to assist in consolidating a lasting political settlement. In helping the countries of the Great Lakes region, the international community would be helping countries such as my own, Botswana. Our prosperity depends on the prosperity of our neighbours and of Africa.

We encourage the countries of Africa's Great Lakes region to begin the new year with a sense of hope and determination to work towards ensuring that peace is possible and achievable in our lifetime. We have witnessed a period of violent conflicts, and never again should our continent and people be subjected to the same painful slaughter of the innocent: men, women and children.

The mandate of the newly established Peacebuilding Commission and today's Council meeting at the initiative of our industrious Tanzanian brothers and sisters should serve as challenges to the countries of the Great Lakes to play their part, to make the transition to peace, tolerance and inclusiveness. This conference presents a great opportunity. This is the African and universal human way: a culture of *botho*, which in my language means a culture rooted in the strong belief that one is human because of the humanity of others.

We therefore urge the Security Council to call upon Member States participating in the International Conference on Peace, Security, Democracy and Development in the Great Lakes Region to approach the negotiations constructively and with a spirit of compromise and moderation so that reason and common sense can prevail.

The second International Conference should be held as early as possible, because progress on the regional dimensions of the peace process would have a salutary effect on the gains attained at the country level. A democratically elected Government has been installed in the Republic of Burundi. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Congolese approved a national Constitution in a referendum held in December 2005. Preparations for national elections are in progress. The Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo deserves the support of the international community to ensure that the elections are held as scheduled.

The success of the elections would be another historic milestone in the democratic process. It would be deeply regrettable if the militia marauding in the region were to endanger a climate conducive to free and fair elections and thus have an adverse impact on the gains made on the road to peace. The international community should not allow this to happen, because it would be tantamount to abandoning the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It is for these reasons that the second International Conference must be convened as a matter of urgency, so that we can not only build on the achievements made at the country level, but also reinforce such gains at the regional level. It would be highly regrettable if countries making progress in building peace and strengthening national and democratic institutions were to relapse into conflict because of slow movement or a lack of progress in tackling the regional dimensions of the peace process.

Let me conclude by stating that a number of resolutions have been adopted by the Security Council on peace and security in the Great Lakes region. Those

decisions should be implemented. Chapter V, Article 25, of the United Nations Charter states:

> "The Members of the United Nations agree to accept and carry out the decisions of the Security Council".

Let us implement these decisions as a matter of urgency, in order to give peace a chance.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Austria, who will speak on behalf of the European Union.

Mr. Pfanzelter (Austria): It is for me a great privilege to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU) and those countries aligning themselves with this statement.

We welcome today's open debate, since it is taking place at a time when the Great Lakes region is at an important crossroads.

I should like to draw the Council's attention to the written statement that is being distributed at this time. I shall therefore limit myself to highlighting the most salient points of our statement.

Never before have we been so close to a settlement of the conflicts in the region. Since the creation of the African Union, Africa has increasingly taken up its responsibilities. The African Union has fast become a reliable partner, which is essential when we talk about strengthening our collaboration between the United Nations and African partners at the regional and subregional levels. The European Union sees itself as a key ally in that effort. Now, with the European Union's Africa Strategy, we want to make a contribution to a peaceful, prosperous and democratic Africa, in close cooperation with the African Union, the United Nations.

Substantive progress has been made in recent years in the Great Lakes region. Burundi last year witnessed the successful conclusion of the transition process. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, too, the successful holding of the referendum on the Constitution and the strong support for it bear witness to the desire of the people for a new beginning. The adoption of the Declaration on Peace, Security, Democracy and Development at the first Summit of Heads of State and Government of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, held in Dar es-Salaam in November 2004, represented a landmark in regional relations. Member States are expected to adopt the Pact on Security, Stability and Development later this year. It is important that all countries live up to the commitments contained therein.

That progress would not have been possible without the dedication of the staff of the United Nations missions in Burundi and in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, especially the peacekeepers, who risk their lives on a daily basis. Just this Monday we were tragically reminded of this when eight Guatemalan peacekeepers lost their lives in an ambush by suspected Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) elements in Garamba National Park. The European Union expresses its sincere condolences to the families of the victims and to the Government of Guatemala and pays tribute to the contribution of the thousands of men and women who have been working with the United Nations for peace in the region.

Progress has been made possible first and foremost because of strong African ownership, whether through the South African mediation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo or the regional initiative in Burundi. Furthermore, the way in which all international partners worked closely together with African partners and the United Nations ensured coherence in their support for the transition in the region.

The European Union's contribution to this effort has been substantial. Our involvement dates back to 1996, when Mr. Aldo Ajello, who is here with us, was appointed EU Special Representative for the African Great Lakes Region. To this day, the EU is deeply involved at the political level, as the recent visits by High Representative Solana and Commissioner Michel to Kinshasa show. But we have also taken very concrete, practical steps to help in the stabilization of the region. In 2003, the EU deployed Operation Artemis, the first-ever European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) mission outside Europe, to the city of Bunia. The determined military effort by the European Union stabilized the situation until the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) was able to take control of the area, and thus helped to save the peace process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo from collapse.

In Burundi, the EU was actively involved in the Arusha peace process and was part of the Commission de Suivi of the Arusha Agreement. The European Union also supported the deployment of the African

Mission in Burundi, which, again, paved the way for the subsequent takeover by a United Nations mission. Therefore, that African Union mission represented the first successful test of AU-United Nations-EU trilateral cooperation in African peacekeeping.

We are also heavily engaged in the humanitarian and political fields. The EU has contributed more than 80 per cent of all the funds required for the election process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Recently, we have been opening new avenues by supporting the crucial restructuring of the security sector, in line with our common goal of providing security to all Congolese. The European Union security mission to the Democratic Republic of the Congo has been providing advice and assistance for security sector reform since June 2005.

The EU civilian police mission — the European Union Police Mission in Kinshasa — is assisting the Congolese authorities in setting up, training and monitoring, on a daily basis, an integrated police unit in charge of the protection of State institutions and the main political leaders.

However, much remains to be done. In Burundi, the problem of the Forces Nationales de Liberation (FNL) must be solved. Burundi will need continued international assistance after the gradual and careful phasing out of the United Nations Operation in Burundi. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the delay in the adoption of the electoral law is jeopardizing the electoral calendar and the conclusion of the transitional period by June 2006. Also, a solution has to be found urgently for the problem of the negative forces in the Democratic Republic of the Congo — be they Congolese or foreign in origin — including the Forces democratiques de liberation du Rwanda (FDLR). The activities of the Lord's Resistance Army are reason for considerable concern, not just because of the humanitarian crisis of immense proportions in northern Uganda. As recent events show, the LRA's activities have intensified in southern Sudan and have spread to the Democratic Republic of the Congo as well, causing more insecurity and threatening the peace processes under way in these areas.

For lasting progress to be achieved, international partners need reliable, democratic partner Governments. It is important that political systems be democratic and inclusive and that they create a climate of trust and participation by all. Good governance and the rule of law will create an environment that is conducive to reconstruction. It is, therefore, essential to take decisive action against corruption, ensure respect for human rights, strengthen the rule of law and fight against the climate of impunity. The International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda and the International Criminal Court have a central role to play in the efforts to bring to justice those responsible for serious human rights violations, war crimes or crimes against humanity.

The international community's support for reconstruction efforts has to be well coordinated and coherent. In particular, we need to think now about the post-transitional phase and how best to support reconstruction and institution-building. This is an area where donors need to work harder and where the Peacebuilding Commission could add particular value.

The provision of security is pivotal in all these efforts. The question of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, repatriation or resettlement of the various armed groups is a central issue in the stabilization of the whole region. The European Union welcomes the robust action undertaken by MONUC in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo in support of the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Equally, the EU welcomes the fact that the Security Council has recently given more attention to this specific question and its regional implications. We also need to ensure that the arms embargo is implemented in good faith and that measures are taken against the illegal exploitation of natural resources. We believe it is important that the international community not disengage too rapidly and that an adequate United Nations presence be maintained in the Democratic Republic of the Congo after the elections. Phasing out the United Nations missions in Burundi and in the Democratic Republic of the Congo should follow clear established benchmarks.

The future of the countries in the region must be built on good-neighbourliness and regional cooperation. The proposed Security, Stability and Development Pact, which is to be adopted at the second Summit of the International Conference on Peace, Security, Democracy and Development in the Great Lakes Region, to be held in Nairobi later this year, will be the basis and reference point for all these efforts. We believe that, given the recent history of the region, the peace and security cluster of the Pact warrants the most urgent attention.

All the elements I have outlined are intertwined. The transformation of the Great Lakes region into an area of lasting peace, stability and prosperity requires sustained, coordinated efforts by all parties involved. The European Union stands ready to play its part and to continue its support for this collaborative effort.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Louis Michel, Commissioner for Development and Humanitarian Aid of the European Commission.

Mr. Michel (European Commission) (*spoke in French*): First of all, I would like to congratulate the United Republic of Tanzania on its assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of January. I would like, Madam President, to hail your initiative to organize, at this very critical juncture, a debate on peace, security and development in the Great Lakes region. You know better than anyone that today we have a real opportunity we must seize — indeed, an opportunity we must wrest from the hand of fate.

I understand very well the honour the Security Council has bestowed upon the European Commission (EC) presided over by José Manuel Barroso by allowing us to address the Council. We would see this as reflecting a conviction that is too often ignored: that while there can be no development without peace or stability, there is no chance for peace or stability without development. And that is precisely what gives specific added value to the institution that I represent.

From that perspective, the Commission fully endorses the statement just made by the European Union presidency, which defined the framework and strategy of the European political contribution to bringing about peace in the Great Lakes region, whose stability is so important for balance, harmony and economic restructuring and human recovery throughout the African continent.

I would recall the steady commitment of the European Commission, which is often at the forefront of the international community, and which is mandated by the European Union to seek a conclusive solution to the crises and conflicts that, for too long now, have affected this region, which is so rich in potential in many areas.

We have always counted on the virtues of a political dialogue that is active and frank, but also respectful and without a hidden agenda. We have no objective other than that of peace, security and the well-being of people. We believe that we can attain it only by rebuilding States that can protect and mediate among their populations and that are legitimate because of democratic systems — States that possess institutions capable of fulfilling the major governing functions that, alone, can ensure for all citizens equal rights, such as access to education, health services, justice, administration and culture.

Beyond our duty to provide emergency humanitarian assistance, our policy has always been based on the conviction that poverty will be vanquished only through the establishment and consolidation of an impartial Government that encourages vigilant civil societies that are able to take on full responsibility for their destiny.

Since 2002, the Union has mobilized more than €1 billion — more than $1.3 billion — for this region and these countries. The Commission has invested in key areas, such as governance and the electoral process — where we are the top donors, with €149 million for the Democratic Republic of the Congo — as well as the rebuilding of services and basic infrastructure. To consolidate these gains, we need to release further funds. But those funds would not and will not be sufficient without unified analysis, action and commitment on the part of all international actors. We will need to maintain this holy alliance until the end of the peace processes, and even beyond.

Until the end, the process will remain fragile, and the enormous promise of a Central Africa that is finally at peace, open and headed for the future will always run the risk of being shattered by, irresponsible behaviour — individual or collective — by sterile quarrels and even by foolish blunders. Our commitment to ourselves and to our African friends will have to remain unshakeable if we are to ward off these dangers once and for all.

But I am optimistic. In Rwanda, the painful wounds of the genocide are starting to subside, little by little. There is already a new economic recovery that can give hope and motivation to members of the young generations, who now know that, if they wish, they can fashion a future of prosperity, solidarity and justice. A little more than 10 years after the abominable tragedy there, we can finally believe that reconciliation is going to take place among the people.

As to Burundi, a few months ago Burundians successfully took up a challenge that we all believed to

be out of reach. They democratically elected a Parliament representing their entire population. They wisely gave the President the broadest possible legitimacy with which to establish the conditions for reunification. The President has created a Government with more than one-third female representation and developed a modern agenda that is generous and ambitious, beginning with free primary education. Those are all undeniably positive signs.

Today in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, a drawn-out and fragile transitional process is gradually being completed. In a few months, more than 25 million Congolese men and women have received their voting cards, providing them for the first time with identity, citizenship and a sense of belonging to a single nation and people. How can we not believe in miracles when we see the miracle being enacted at the registration centres in the hearts and souls of men and women who were hitherto mere phantom citizens? On 18 December, more than 60 per cent of them voted, for the first time in 40 years. Eighty-four per cent of the voters ratified a balanced and democratic constitution, because they instinctively understood that, through that founding gesture, they held the key to turning the tide of their own history.

To the very end, the international community must help and encourage them and exhort their leaders to adhere to the electoral timetable. An electoral law must be enacted that will, I hope, provide for the broadest possible representation of all sectors of Congolese society in order to avert any resurgence of the sense of exclusion.

How can we fail to see that these countries have a shared destiny? I am deeply convinced that the successful completion of the process may be difficult, not only regionally, but throughout Africa. The regional dimension strikes me as being fundamental. We need to join forces and to focus attention on themes of common interest, basing our action on the principle — one that is at the very heart of the construction of Europe — that it is by sharing our interests, problems and resources that we are able to achieve and maintain peace and increase prosperity. I am therefore pleased to see the determination of those three countries to give new impetus to the Economic Community of the Great Lakes Countries. We ourselves are determined to provide substantial funding for that project.

In considering the prospects, how can we fail unequivocally to denounce the barbarous acts and inhuman attacks perpetrated this week by several criminal groups, which, in their own sordid interests, are terrorizing innocent citizens and even killing those who, at their own peril and on our behalf, went there to protect them?

The European Commission has always taken a voluntarist approach, along with its special partners in the United Nations, the Bretton Woods institutions, the African Union and other donors. The Peacebuilding Commission will have a major role to play in that respect. The European Commission will become even further involved in the development strategy as an essential factor in conflict prevention and in the re-establishment of the rule of law through independent and trustworthy judicial systems, effective public administrations that can control their territory, and reformed security forces subject to strict democratic oversight.

In conclusion, I deeply believe that relations between us and Africa have been reborn and are evolving in mutual respect between partners that are equal in rights and responsibilities and capable of engaging in dialogue and debate and of living with their differences in the firm resolve to reach a common understanding of the concepts of democracy and law. I believe that we must resolutely and consistently look to the largest possible common denominator — the major concepts that regulate the organization of modern societies. Such notions as justice, solidarity and freedom must be subject to debate. The international community cannot unilaterally impose its terms of reference.

We must also be guided and persuaded by our partners. Their experience, history, perceptions and culture can enrich ours. I believe that, if we wish, we can finally begin to exorcise the demons of our respective pasts and achieve a common reading of history. Only thus can we build together a world of peace, justice and freedom.

The President: I give the floor to the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs of Qatar, His Excellency Mr. Ahmad bin Abdullah Al-Mahmoud.

Mr. Al-Mahmoud (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): It gives me pleasure to begin by congratulating you, Madam, on the great competence and statesmanship with which your delegation has conducted the work of

the Council in order to realize the purposes and objectives of the United Nations Charter. The initiative to convene this ministerial meeting of the Security Council to discuss the question of peace, security and development in the Great Lakes region of Africa is undoubtedly a step in that direction. It indeed reaffirms the importance you attach to the African continent, which has suffered terribly from the scourges of war, conflict and marginalization that have negatively influenced the development of a great continent distinguished by its time-honoured history, great peoples and resources.

We would also like to extend our thanks to Secretary-General Kofi Annan for his efforts to highlight the suffering and marginalization of the majority of the people of that continent, including those living in the Great Lakes region. We value his search for appropriate solutions that will preserve the dignity of the African people, realize peace and achieve development.

This meeting is important because it is convened to support the initiatives of the Security Council and the Secretary-General to address issues related to African conflicts, primarily those highlighted in resolution 1625 (2005) on the prevention of armed conflict, especially in Africa. The Security Council adopted that resolution at the summit it held on the margins of the High-level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly in September 2005. In that context, we cannot dismiss the sheer determination of the African States in establishing the African Union's Peace and Security Council and entrusting it with the tasks of conflict prevention, resolution and peacekeeping in Africa. That achievement has allowed the African Union to develop a genuine partnership with the Security Council towards achieving a better understanding of the region's difficulties and consequently addressing, in a comprehensive manner, the root causes of conflicts in Africa.

We have little doubt that the memory of the violent conflicts and crimes of genocide that raged in the Great Lakes region will remain vivid in our minds for a long time to come. For that reason alone, we should redouble our efforts and work tirelessly to prevent the outbreak of new conflicts and to resolve those that are still festering. We are all aware of the extremely complicated demographic and geopolitical realities of that subregion of the continent, which can affect the region as a whole. It is therefore incumbent upon us to search for innovative solutions based on a regional approach, as called for at the first International Conference on Peace, Security, Democracy and Development in the Great Lakes Region, held in Tanzania in 2004.

In view of what I have said, one question remains to be answered is how and to what extent the United Nations and the international community can assist the countries of the Great Lakes region in the implementation of the Dar es-Salaam vision. It is true that the United Nations has achieved great success in bringing about stability in the region, but the remaining challenges are equally great. We must therefore approach that question more realistically, work to consolidate the gains that have been achieved so far, and explore which avenues could be pursued in order to face future challenges, even if that means a more robust United Nations field presence, including peacekeeping forces.

As we speak of United Nations staff in the field, allow me to extend my country's condolences to the families and the Governments of fallen peacekeepers who have lost their lives in the line of duty while discharging the noble tasks entrusted to them.

Although we are currently focused on questions of peace, security, democracy and good governance, as well as on social and humanitarian questions, we believe that there are other issues of equal importance included in the vision of the Dar es-Salaam Declaration. These pertain to economic development and regional integration, which, in our view, are two basic pillars of lasting stability in the region. Regrettably, those issues have not received the attention they deserve from the Security Council. It is not that the Council has no interest in such questions, but those two issues fall outside the Council's purview and involve other stakeholders, such as international financial institutions and donor countries, who must assist the countries of the region in translating their aspirations into reality.

We in the State of Qatar are convinced that the countries of the South can shoulder their share of the responsibility for the development of the South. For that reason, His Royal Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, Emir of the State of Qatar, took the initiative of establishing the South Development Fund which we hope, when it becomes operational, will contribute to the economic development and regional integration of the Great Lakes region.

The Peacebuilding Commission, established by Security Council resolution 1645 (2005) and General Assembly resolution 60/181, fulfils a cherished aspiration; it represents a suitable mechanism to assist countries emerging from conflict in preserving peace and achieving sustainable development. It can also prevent such countries from regressing to a state of conflict. We cannot fail to praise the efforts that led to the adoption of the wise decision to establish the Commission, which we hope will play the role expected of it, as articulated in the relevant agreements.

In conclusion, let me affirm that we support the draft resolution before the Council on peace, security and development in the Great Lakes region, and we call for its adoption.

Mr. Burian (Slovakia): At the outset, I would like to affirm that the Great Lakes region represents one of the major security challenges of the contemporary world. We think it is high time to address the problems of the region in all their complexity, and to achieve a lasting peaceful settlement that will contribute positively to the stability and development of the entire continent.

In that context, we commend the United Republic of Tanzania for taking this very relevant and timely initiative. We agree with you, Madam President, that this meeting of the Security Council is truly a historic event.

Slovakia associates itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Austria on behalf of the European Union, and with the statement delivered by Mr. Louis Michel of the European Commission. That is why I will limit myself to a few points that we feel strongly about. The full text of our statement will be circulated.

In recent months we have witnessed encouraging developments in the field of political consolidation in the Great Lakes region: democratic elections in Burundi and a successful constitutional referendum in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Those positive moments provided proof of the political maturity of the peoples of Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo and can serve as a beacon of hope within the grim reality of the current situation in the Great Lakes region.

We are aware that there are possible spoilers who could benefit from postponements in the peace and national reconciliation processes. It is therefore crucial to prevent such attempts and not to allow the deterioration of the security situation to have a destructive effect on political processes that have proceeded well so far. Slovakia is deeply concerned about the recent instances of renewed fighting in North Kivu and Katanga, and especially about the attack against the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) that occurred on 23 January 2006.

In that context, we want to emphasize a problem that has been overlooked by the international community for a long time. I am speaking of the most violent and cruel criminal activities carried out in the region by the Lord's Resistance Army. In that connection, we would like to stress two points. First, we note the efforts made by the Ugandan Government to tackle the issue. However, we cannot overlook the fact that innocent civilians continue to die. There are new patterns emerging in the campaign of the Lord's Resistance Army, including attacks on humanitarian workers and peacekeepers who are on the ground to help refugees and internally displaced persons and to safeguard peace. We think that decisive action is needed to stop the destructive activities of the Lord's Resistance Army and to bring perpetrators to justice by executing the warrants of the International Criminal Court.

Secondly, we agree that the primary responsibility to protect lies with Governments. However, it is the responsibility of the international community to help and protect the most vulnerable if the national authorities are not able to cope with the magnitude of the problem. That is the reason Slovakia is ready to support initiatives of the international community that would, in cooperation with the Governments of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Uganda and the Sudan, identify possible measures that could then be taken by the Security Council to eliminate the activities of the Lord's Resistance Army.

Since the situation in the Great Lakes region is extremely complex, the responses must be comprehensive and far-reaching. There are three levels on which the problems must be tackled: national, regional and international.

On the national level, fighting corruption and implementing the principles of good governance are

imperatives. Security-sector reform, demobilization and disarmament processes must be further enhanced and accelerated. Ownership of solutions to those problems must be assumed by national Governments.

The regional level of cooperation has special importance. Neither national, nor international efforts can bear the desired fruit in the Great Lakes region if they are not implemented in the regional framework. We would like to encourage the countries of the region and other regional stakeholders to accelerate their efforts to prepare for the second Great Lakes Summit, which should adopt the proposed Security, Stability and Development Pact for the Great Lakes region and enhance the existing forms of dialogue and cooperation, with special regard to confidence and security-building measures. The questions of development and respect for human rights are clearly issues that will need further attention from the international community, since there is no security without development and respect for human rights.

Last but not least, the international community should bear a major responsibility with regard to formulating and implementing post-conflict strategies once the transition is complete. The establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission could not be timelier. There is already one suitable candidate in the Great Lakes region for the Commission's attention: Burundi. We believe that there will be another after 30 June.

Slovakia welcomes the draft resolution on peace, stability and development in the Great Lakes region (S/2006/51). We believe that it comprehensively covers the complex issues that the Great Lakes region faces. The draft resolution has our full support.

Mr. Denisov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I wish first of all to welcome you, Madam Minister, and to thank you for presiding over the Security Council at this meeting. I wish also to welcome Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Council members and States of the Great Lakes region who have come to New York to consider the question of strengthening peace, security and sustainable development in the Great Lakes region.

African issues are constantly at the centre of the Council's attention. This reflects the international community's grave concern at the complex ongoing situation on the African continent. Recent developments in the Great Lakes region show clearly that the most important way to settle conflict in the region and throughout Africa is to strengthen the rule of law by developing democracy and good governance.

The Council's consideration of current conflict situations in the Great Lakes region continues to indicate that the greatest difficulties arise in the settlement of problems relating to the transitional and post-conflict periods. The implementation of legislation and the revival or establishment of legal systems take place slowly. Programmes of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration are carried out with difficulty or are completely blocked — notably by illegal Congolese or foreign armed groups operating in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and in neighbouring States, where their destabilizing impact on the region's peace process has recently taken on an increased cross-border character.

At the same time, we note the generally positive momentum in the peace processes in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in Burundi. That is encouraging, and it reflects a solid trend towards overall stabilization.

To consolidate the success of the Burundi peace process and to make it irreversible, the democratically elected Government still has many severe problems to address. Naturally, that will require considerable assistance from the international community, including through the participation of the Peacebuilding Commission, the Friends of Burundi and the leading donors.

The priority for the leaders and the parliament of the Democratic Republic of the Congo is to accelerate the establishment of a legal and logistical basis for the holding of free, honest, transparent and democratic elections in June 2006. Still pending is the thorny problem of the disarmament, reintegration and voluntary repatriation of members of foreign armed groups operating in the eastern provinces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

In our view, it is of great importance that regional cooperation among the States of the Great Lakes region — in particular Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo — be established, along with putting in place confidence-building measures and resolving outstanding bilateral issues. This should be done in the framework of multilateral security mechanisms such as the Tripartite Plus One Joint Commission.

In resolving disarmament problems, the regional dimension must be emphasized by broadening and deepening cooperation among neighbouring States.

Stabilizing the situation in Central Africa and putting in place solid conditions conducive to development are closely linked to a successful outcome of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region. A major task in the upcoming phase will be to carry out an objective analysis of compliance with the Dar es-Salaam Declaration of Principles on Peace, Security, Democracy and Development in the Great Lakes Region and, at the second summit of States of the region, to adopt viable, balanced, achievable decisions binding on all, particularly in the areas of peace and security.

I wish to note that my delegation fully supports the draft resolution (S/2006/51) that has been prepared for adoption at the end of today's meeting.

Finally, Madam President, I should like once again to thank you and the delegation of the United Republic of Tanzania for the great effort you have put into preparing and conducting today's meeting.

Ms. Løj (Denmark): Denmark appreciates this opportunity to discuss the issue of peace, security and development in the Great Lakes region. We welcome the Tanzanian initiative to hold this debate and the fact that you, Madam Minister, are presiding over our discussion.

We would like to associate ourselves with the statement delivered by the Permanent Representative of Austria on behalf of the European Union.

We welcome the participation today of a large number of ministers. Political dedication is the driving force, and their strong commitment to promote peace and stability is absolutely essential.

The progress in the transitional process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is encouraging, because peace and stability in that country is seen as one of the key factors in obtaining peace and stability throughout the region. Respect for sovereignty, non-interference and closer cooperation between individual States in the region constitute another key factor. The International Conference on Peace, Security, Democracy and Development in the Great Lakes Region provides a forum for cooperation, and we hope that the second Great Lakes summit takes place as soon as possible.

Atrocities and criminal behaviour by militias and armed groups operating in the Great Lakes region continue to pose a threat to regional stability. The countries of the region must take measures to prevent the use of their respective territories in support of activities of armed groups. And they must combat the cross-border trafficking of illicit arms and illicit resources and the movement of combatants by strictly enforcing the arms embargo applied to the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

In that regard, I should like to underline that the links among the illegal exploitation of natural resources, the illegal trade in those resources and the proliferation and trafficking of arms must be fully recognized as yet another factor fuelling and exacerbating conflicts in the region. We urge countries in the region to enhance their cooperation in promoting lawful and transparent exploitation of natural resources. That will promote peace as well as economic development.

The need for protection of civilian populations is immense throughout the region. We should like to stress that Governments in the region have the primary responsibility to protect their populations in accordance with international law and to ensure the full, safe and unhindered access of humanitarian workers to people in need.

In order to secure long-term stability and respect for the rule of law, all States concerned must take action to bring to justice perpetrators of grave violations of human rights and international humanitarian law. And all States should cooperate with international criminal courts to ensure the apprehension and surrender of suspects. Where the United Nations is engaged, it should assist the States in that endeavour.

Through the combined efforts of the countries of the region, the United Nations and the African Union, the various conflicts in the region have now turned a critical corner towards resolution. We would like to encourage enhanced African ownership and participation in conflict-management on the continent. The Security Council should explore how best to support ongoing efforts to develop the African security architecture and to work closely with the African Union to advance ways and means of cooperation.

We are increasingly drawing on the resources and legitimacy of a network of multilateral mechanisms,

regional and global, to provide collective responses to the peace and security challenges of today. The task ahead of us is to make sure that our cooperation mechanisms work as well as possible. They must be effective, efficient and mutually reinforcing, and they must be flexible and responsive.

In its regional approach to the Great Lakes region, the Security Council must focus not just on peacekeeping and peacebuilding, but also on conflict prevention and resolution, including governance issues and the social and economic components of peace.

The issues that I have just touched upon are all reflected in the draft resolution (S/2006/51) initiated by Tanzania. The complexity of the draft resolution is a clear indication of the comprehensive Security Council engagement aimed at the resolution of the conflicts in the Great Lakes region. Denmark wholeheartedly supports the draft resolution.

The President: I give the floor to Mr. Richard Sezibera, Special Envoy of the President of Rwanda for the Great Lakes region.

Mr. Sezibera (Rwanda): I would like first of all to thank you, Madam President, for having associated Rwanda with the deliberations of this meeting of the Security Council. We are pleased and honoured to see the United Republic of Tanzania presiding over the proceedings of the Council this month. We are extremely glad to see you, Madam, occupying the presidency. We have no doubt that your able leadership will make the work of the Council extremely productive. We pay tribute to the United Republic of Tanzania, working in concert with all of its neighbours, for its tireless efforts in the search for peace and shared development in the Great Lakes region and, indeed, in the entire African continent.

This meeting of the Security Council is dedicated to the examination of events in the Great Lakes region. More specifically, it seeks to address peace, security and development in the region. Those issues are, indeed, all interrelated and crucial. The people of our region are not only interlinked ethnically, culturally, linguistically and economically, but they also have — as the developments in post-genocide Rwanda, the elections in Burundi and the electoral process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo attest — expressed their desire and their determination to forge a better future, despite, and moving beyond, the traumas of the past.

The countries of the region have been tireless in the search for peace and stability in the region. They have played a major role in the return of peace in Burundi and the advent of a new political dispensation in that country. They continue to play a key role in finding solutions to the crises in Somalia and the Sudan.

The principles of regional ownership of peace processes and international partnership are not merely empty slogans. Our region has shown that they are possible, and that, when applied correctly, they produce results.

Rwanda is encouraged by the progress of the political process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Many of the pillars of the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement of 1999 have slowly but surely been realized. The war, which at its peak involved many States, has stopped. Instead of confrontation and conflict, States in the region are now exploring avenues of increased cooperation. The Congolese people have a new political dispensation and are involved in a process that will further cement it, as they move beyond the transitional arrangements agreed on at Sun City, South Africa, and establish structures reflective of the will of the people. Foreign troops have withdrawn from the Democratic Republic of the Congo in a process aided and observed by the region and by the international community.

Rwanda believes that the prospects for lasting peace, deepened stability and shared prosperity are better now than they have been at any other moment since the genocide of 1994. The region and the rest of the international community need to work together to consolidate the gains in peace and security, while also laying a solid groundwork for sustained and sustainable shared prosperity. In order to effectively do that, however, we will all need to address the unfinished business of the Lusaka process. As I have already said, many of the building blocks for regional peace, as identified by that process, have been put in place. Unfortunately, there still remains one key impediment to lasting peace: the presence of genocidal forces and other armed groups in the region, whose sole purpose is the continued destabilization of our countries.

Until and unless the people of the region are freed of the fear, the tyranny and the attacks of the forces currently calling themselves the Forces

démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR), the Lord's Resistance Army, the Palipehutu-Forces nationales de libération and other armed groups that currently sow desolation in the east of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the rest of the region, the emerging peace will continue to be fragile and development will remain a distant dream for many of our people.

Rwandans continue to ask why, for 11 years now, they have had to continue to live with the spectre of genocide. They would like to know why the Security Council has not yet permanently ended the threat posed by those forces, and they question why the sanctions Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004) and the Group of Experts re-established under resolution 1596 (2005) have not yet tackled the issue of the flow of arms and other supplies to those groups with the seriousness it deserves. I dare to hope that this open meeting will provide the answers to those questions, both through the draft resolution to be adopted later and through actions taken by United Nations forces on the ground.

Rwanda would like to take this opportunity to express its condolences to the Government and the people of Guatemala, to the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and to the entire United Nations family on the loss of the Guatemalan peacekeepers in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The deaths of those valiant peacekeepers should spur the Council to further, stronger and more effective action.

The Governments of the region, through their ministers for foreign affairs, meeting in Kampala in October last year, provided the Council with suggestions about how that could be done. I hope that this body will take the necessary decisions. Rwanda, for its part, will continue to extend to any and all members of the FDLR who repatriate all the rights and responsibilities that Rwandans enjoy, as is their unconditional and inalienable right.

An important building block in the emerging architecture of peace in our region is the International Conference on Peace, Security and Development in the Great Lakes Region. The first Summit of Heads of State and Government, held in Dar es-Salaam in November 2004, provided a vision of a region transformed from a theatre of incessant conflict to one of shared prosperity. They also provided a road map for how that transformation could occur. Rwanda hopes that the postponed second Summit will take place as expeditiously as possible.

As the region works towards the signing of the proposed Security, Stability and Development Pact, the key principles of the region's ownership of both the process and the outcomes, sustained international partnership and inclusion, which are the pillars of the Conference process, will continue to be critical. It is also important to reaffirm the link among peace and security, good governance and economic development. Peace and security processes that are not anchored by good governance practices, sustained growth and poverty reduction are fragile indeed. That is why we believe that the four themes of the Conference are equally important.

The Conference process has fostered dialogue among Governments, parliamentarians, civil society actors, the private sector, women's groups, young people, media professionals, religious leaders and others. It has raised the expectations of millions of citizens in the region. In order for those expectations to be met, additional resources will have to be mobilized both within the region and from the international community. If that is not done, then it will simply be another conference that makes lots of headlines but has no measurable impact on the region's poor.

As the region establishes a follow-up mechanism for the Conference, there is a need for serious discussions on mechanisms for continued partnership with the international community in the years ahead. Serious thought will also have to be given to novel ways of funding the identified outcomes, which will be reflected in the pact.

The formal establishment of a Peacebuilding Commission in December 2005 by the Security Council through its resolution 1645 (2005) and by the General Assembly through its resolution 60/180 is a very welcome event. Many countries in the Great Lakes region are in transition from conflict to sustainable peace and development. They are therefore ideal candidates for assistance from the Commission.

Rwanda, given its history, is ready to contribute to the Commission's success. It is important that the initiatives currently under way in the Great Lakes region find some link with the Commission. We are ready to make our contribution when called upon to do so, be it through the sharing of ideas, material

resources or personnel. Rwanda also pledges to continue to make its contribution to the return of peace and stability to the region and to the protection of vulnerable populations, especially on our continent, in concert with the African Union and the United Nations.

I would like to conclude by paying tribute to all those who have worked tirelessly for peace in our region. First of all, my tribute goes to the people and the leaders of the region, who have decided to take its destiny in their hands. They need the Council's support. We wish to recognize the invaluable role played by the United Nations and all its organs and by the African Union and all its organs. We thank the United States of America, the facilitator of the Tripartite Plus One Commission. The Commission has contributed to the emerging return of confidence among the Governments of Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Uganda, enabling them to identify common threats and to face them collectively. I thank the Group of Friends of the Great Lakes Region, co-chaired by Canada and the Netherlands, for their invaluable assistance to the International Conference on Peace, Security, Democracy and Development in the Great Lakes Region.

All those concerted efforts have led the region to the brink of lasting peace and sustainable development. Rwanda believes that this is not the time to rest and do less; it is the time for a recommitment to do more — much more.

The President: Once again, I appeal to speakers with longer statements to circulate the texts of their statements to delegations and to limit their interventions to no more than five minutes so that we can accommodate all speakers by the end of the day. I thank participants for their understanding.

I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Lam Akol Ajawin, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Sudan.

Mr. Ajawin (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): I wish to congratulate you, Madam, and the United Republic of Tanzania on assuming the presidency of the Security Council for the month of January. As this is the first time that I have addressed the Council, I wish to express our gratitude for the interest that the Council has consistently devoted to my country, the Sudan, since the negotiations began in Kenya and since the Council visited Nairobi last November to provide impetus to the peace process, and for the role played by the United Nations in implementing the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. On behalf of the Government of National Unity, I assure the Council of our serious commitment to implementing the Peace Agreement and making it a reality not only in the south, but throughout the Sudan. That will promote stability and peace in the Great Lakes region and on the continent as a whole.

There can be no doubt that the issue we are discussing at today's meeting — peace, security and development in the Great Lakes region — has been of great importance to international peace and security for decades. This region, in the heart of Africa, has endured a number of conflicts and civil wars. The Sudan is an integral part of the region and is inevitably influenced by any positive or negative developments in its other States. Therefore, we have participated in all meetings concerning the region since the Security Council, in 1994, supported the holding, under the auspices of the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity of an international conference on the Great Lakes region, through the holding of the Dar es-Salaam Summit in November 2004 and the adoption of the Dar es-Salaam Declaration on Peace, Security, Democracy and Development in the Great Lakes Region.

The Declaration, adopted by the heads of State or Government, is a programme of action covering all priority areas, including the establishment of lasting peace through regional efforts aimed at ending conflicts and establishing conflict prevention and monitoring mechanisms. Led by the United Nations and the African Union, the rest of the international community and other partners and friends of the Great Lakes region must also become involved.

We welcome the consensus on collective regional cooperation and are optimistic that, through such joint regional and international efforts, we will be able to consolidate lasting peace and dispel the mistrust and suspicion among the region's countries, mentioned in the second paragraph of the Dar es-Salaam Declaration. Now we will be able to focus on other tasks. We urge the international community to strengthen national and regional capacity, in particular that of African forces, through the provision of financing and equipment so that they can shoulder their responsibility to put an end to conflicts and disputes.

In addition, there are other pressing concerns. First, strengthening the principles of democracy and

good governance in the region will lay the foundation for balanced and sustainable development and institution-building. That will help to ensure peaceful coexistence among the States of the region, which in turn will pave the way for bilateral and regional cooperation regarding the refugee situation and the ongoing disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) efforts in a number of countries.

We must combat trafficking in small arms and light weapons and prevent the circulation of such weapons among non-State actors. We must also combat transnational organized crime. That will further strengthen trust among States of the region, thereby helping us turn the page and put an end to conflicts. It will allow us also to exploit our natural resources for development, undertake joint projects for economic cooperation and pursue other joint efforts.

Peace and security go hand in hand, in particular in a region such as the Great Lakes region, which historically has gone through periods of instability. The Dar es-Salaam summit, held last year, outlined four major areas for action: peace and security; democratic governance and economic development; regional integration; and humanitarian and social issues. It paved the way for a second summit, which was to have been held in 2005, to devise implementation measures with respect to those areas of concern – hence the importance of support on the part of the international community and of international agencies in those areas. The goal is to build on the advances towards peace made in some regions and to resolve some persistent causes of tension.

The goal is to bring about a culture of peace and cooperation, in keeping with the preamble of the UNESCO Constitution, which states that: "Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed."

The draft resolution before the Council today reflects the strong support of the Security Council for the achievement of peace, security and development in the region. A time frame must be set for monitoring and follow-up with respect to the measures undertaken on the basis of the priorities mentioned earlier, so that we can work together. Indeed, there have been some positive developments in some areas of the region, primarily in Burundi and in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We hope that the draft resolution that is before the members of the Security Council will lead to a more committed and effective involvement by the United Nations to ensure peace, security and sustainable development in the Great Lakes region.

The President: I give the floor to Mr. Karel De Gucht, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Belgium.

Mr. De Gucht (Belgium): Madam President, I am most grateful for your kind invitation to participate in this debate on peace, security and development in the Great Lakes region. I commend you, Madam, and the other members of the Council for the importance the Security Council continues to give to this region and for the special attention it is receiving under your presidency.

Let me at the very outset stress the indispensable and prominent role played by the United Nations in Africa, both here in New York and in the field. Let me also on this occasion share my personal feelings and those of the people of Belgium with the families of the eight peacekeepers who just a few days ago lost their lives in the cause of peace.

Africa is one of the highest priorities for my country, which is fully committed to its cause, particularly to peace, security and development in the Great Lakes region. Africa's problems are of concern to us all. They need a forceful response, first and foremost from Africa, but also from Africa's partners within the international community. Belgium, working bilaterally and very closely with its partners within the European Union, is fully committed to a progressive political and economic agenda for Africa. I should like to associate myself fully with the statement made by the representative of Austria on behalf of the European Union.

Conflicts, together with the limited capacity of many African States, greatly reduce the development prospects of the whole continent. While Asia is lifting itself rapidly out of poverty and Latin America continues to make steady progress, the situation in Africa is quite disturbing.

It is true that Africa has been a victim of past history, of exploitation and of the slow response of the international community to its needs. However, Africa is also the victim of internal strife, endless war and regional conflict, corruption and poor management. This cannot go on — for Africa's sake and for the world's.

A real and sustainable take-off of the African continent as a whole will be successful only if we can

establish lasting peace and stability in the Great Lakes region. It is an illusion to think that a continent can be developed as long as its heart is engulfed in conflict and poverty. The Great Lakes region, and the Congo in particular, have the potential to become the motor of African development. It is therefore of the utmost importance that the transition in the Congo be a success and that the other countries in the region — Burundi, Rwanda and Uganda — continue their political and economic reconstruction process towards the establishment of stable and democratic societies, with a responsible leadership eager to build modern state institutions based on the rule of law.

It is my strong opinion that the fate of Africa will to a large extent depend on the future of the Great Lakes region. We must seize the opportunity to help the countries of that region pursue and consolidate change, and we must do it now. How do we proceed?

I think that the time for reflection has passed. International gatherings and conferences have no doubt played a role in the overall awareness of the African plight. But the time has now come to deliver — to make sure that the average citizen in Africa can see and feel that things are moving.

That implies a reappraisal of the donor efforts in Africa. Have we been doing the right thing? Were we perhaps inspired by colonial reflexes, by rivalry, or simply by actors wanting to promote their short-term interests without taking into account the needs of the population? Are we doing enough to open up our markets to African products? In short, is the international community really gearing up for a much-needed, comprehensive effort to give Africans all the opportunities they need and deserve?

We, as representatives of the international community, must dare to ask these critical questions. But, conversely, Africans, too, must dare to live up to their responsibilities. Former Minister Ousman Sy of Mali said: "Africa is not poor, it is badly governed". That is definitely too harsh a statement, but we have to reflect upon it.

When speaking of good governance, I am not referring to a moralizing concept imposed by outsiders. Nor am I pleading for a system by which good and bad points are distributed in a senseless contest. What I mean by good governance is effective governance. It is about institution-building, about Governments capable of producing tangible results for the benefit of the people. It is about creating the proper conditions for sustainable development. Of course, it is impossible to turn failing States into perfectly governed States overnight. But it is possible to gradually improve and to relentlessly enhance the performance of Governments.

In that context, I would like to encourage current African efforts to redress poor governance, such as the African Peer Review Mechanism of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). But I am also thinking of concrete economic mechanisms such as the Kimberley process. That mechanism has proved to be quite efficient in containing the smuggling of diamonds and in effectively limiting the financing of conflicts in the continent. My country, together with others, is currently studying the possibility of introducing a similar system for the trade in other raw materials.

Lasting and sustainable solutions to the challenges at hand have to grow bottom-up, from the inside, by empowering civil society and the emerging political class fully to assume their newly recovered responsibilities — bottom-up, not top-down; from the inside, not the outside; and through empowerment, not through tutelage. If that approach is to be successful, we, the international community, must redirect our attention from the abstract level of vague policy recommendations to the concrete level of effective implementation, in the field, for the benefit of the people, whose fate is the ultimate object of our concerns.

For any development to have a reasonable chance of success, armed conflict must cease, the security of people must be assured and the rule of law must be guaranteed. Peace can be assured only when armies are integrated, when the military personnel are decently paid, when police forces are well organized and when the judiciary is properly functioning.

I am convinced that the regional approach taken by the Security Council when dealing with security issues in a number of countries — such as Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi — is the right one. I commend the Council for its efforts and refer in this respect to resolution 1625 (2005), as well as to the resolution the Council will adopt today.

Long-term stability in Central Africa definitely does require a regional approach. My vision for the region is one of a growing pool of democratic countries

with inclusive Governments, stable institutions and a functioning judiciary. I trust that the International Conference for the Great Lakes Region, through its action plan, will foster regional initiatives, including in the field of development, in a focused way. I see a stabilizing influence coming from regional economic cooperation through a revitalized CEPGL — the "Communauté Economique des Pays des Grands Lacs" — which can be an instrument of integration bringing the people of Congo, Rwanda and Burundi closer together.

I think that, already at this stage, particular attention should be given to the post-electoral period in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, with a special focus on good governance, development cooperation and economic reconstruction. It is my personal opinion that the new Peacebuilding Commission could play a useful role in post-transition Congo.

I am very much encouraged by the smooth transition and election process in Burundi, which opens up prospects for lasting peace and stability not only in Burundi itself but in the Great Lakes region in general. In Burundi also, the Peacebuilding Commission may be called upon to play a useful role.

Before concluding, I would like to stress the vital contribution that countries of the region have made to the restoration of peace and security in the Great Lakes region. Some of those countries, such as Tanzania and the Republic of the Congo, are currently members of the Security Council. Others are not but play a role no less crucial. Allow me to refer specifically to South Africa and Angola. My country very much values its cooperation with all these countries.

You can trust, Madam President, that we will continue to work with all the countries of the region, with all our partners in Africa and indeed with the African Union itself, towards the establishment of lasting peace in the region of the Great Lakes.

The President: I now give the floor to the Netherlands Special Envoy to the Great Lakes Region, His Excellency Mr. Frederik Rackè.

Mr. Rackè (Netherlands): The Netherlands delegation fully associates itself with the statement made earlier by the Austrian presidency of the European Union.

As Co-Chair of the Group of Friends of the Great Lakes Region, the Netherlands has shown its strong commitment to contribute and assist in promoting regional and bilateral solutions to the conflicts that have ravaged the region for so long. Therefore we have gladly accepted the invitation of the United Republic of Tanzania to participate in this open debate of the Security Council and to add a few remarks of our own, focusing on the achievements so far and challenges still ahead.

But first of all, Madam President, let me join other delegations in strongly condemning the attack against the detachment of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) on 23 January 2006, which resulted in the death of eight Guatemalan peacekeepers and the severe wounding of five others. We offer our sincere condolences to the victims' families and to the authorities of Guatemala. We commend the dedication and courage of MONUC personnel.

The Netherlands Government very much welcomes the initiative of the United Republic of Tanzania for this important and timely open debate emphasizing the continued involvement of the Security Council with the Great Lakes region. I am particularly pleased, Madam Minister, to see you presiding over this meeting.

We saw some quite positive developments last year. We can wholeheartedly congratulate the Government of Burundi on the successful completion of the transition and on the elections. Hopefully, they will serve as an example for the electoral process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which so successfully started with the referendum on the 18 December. Despite some delays, preparations for elections in the Democratic Republic of the Congo are now being carried out with great determination and the necessary sense of urgency. Let us hope that the democratic process there is irreversible.

In 2005 we also saw that the countries in the region had actually aligned themselves in finding diplomatic and peaceful solutions within the Tripartite Commission, which has been so successfully facilitated by the United States. We are pleased to see that Burundi has joined this Tripartite — now being called Tripartite Plus — mechanism. We urge that this mechanism remain in force.

These are all important, positive developments promoting peace and stability in the longer term. Concerning the Great Lakes Conference, we still see

some challenges ahead. The Conference, we think, still has to find a clear focus, and the postponement of the Summit, which was envisaged to take place in December last year in Nairobi, has affected the very credibility of the Conference.

We call upon the countries of the region to maintain and to show their commitment to the process and make sure the momentum will not be lost as a result of the postponement. We think that in the coming months strong leadership is required, and in that respect we count on the Tanzanian presidency of the Conference. Some serious decisions will have to be taken and difficult choices will have to be made. In line with the proposals presented by the Tanzanian Government, we support the idea of a permanent regional mechanism to strengthen democracy, good governance, the rule of law, the protection of human rights and reconciliation.

We urge the countries of the region to honour their commitments made in the Dar es-Salaam Declaration of 2004 and to continue their collective efforts in developing a subregional framework for promoting and strengthening good relations, peaceful coexistence and peaceful resolution of disputes. We also urge the countries of the region to prepare seriously for the second Summit, in Nairobi, which should take place as soon as possible, and to adopt a security, stability and development pact for the countries of the Great Lakes region.

As far as peace and security is concerned, there certainly are serious challenges still ahead. The tragic events in the east of the Democratic Republic of the Congo that I mentioned earlier have made clear that the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) poses a threat to regional peace and security, affecting the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in Sudan and the transitional process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The recent briefing by the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Jan Egeland, highlighted once more the impact that the activities of the LRA are having on the civilian populations of northern Uganda, southern Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The international community should assume its responsibility to address this threat to regional security, which is combined with the humanitarian crisis. In that respect, we hope that the International Criminal Court's arrest warrants concerning five leaders of the LRA will be effectively executed as soon as possible, also in the light of their preventive impact on further atrocities.

We believe that the so-called core group of countries already involved in the peace process should develop a comprehensive strategy to end the conflict and mobilize broader international support for a long-term strategy, in support of and in cooperation with the Government of Uganda. Furthermore, we believe the worsening detrimental effects of the activities of the Lord's Resistance Army on regional peace and security warrant attention by the Security Council. The international involvement should focus on the political process, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, return, reconstruction and development and should also assist the Governments in the region to address the security problems caused by the continued presence of the Lord's Resistance Army on their territory.

The Netherlands will continue to remain fully committed in its efforts to alleviate the tragic suffering of the people and to promote the peaceful solution of the conflict.

Mr. D'Alotto (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): We would like to thank you, Madam, and the delegation of Tanzania for organizing this open debate on such an important subject as peace, security and development in the Great Lakes region of Africa.

Through the decades, that region has had to face civil wars and conflicts among countries of the region that have caused terrible suffering through grave human rights violations, the internal displacement of civilians and refugees, and the destruction of property and national economies. Unfortunately, such facts have been a historic constant for all those nations, especially during their period of foundation.

The Great Lakes region has been no exception. However, a democratically elected Government in Burundi and progress in the transition towards democratic elections in the Democratic Republic of the Congo are advances that encourage hope for a future of peace, stability and progress for the region. Those advances have been made possible by several circumstances, including stronger and more decisive collaboration among Governments of the subregion; the efforts of the African Union and other multilateral organs; the organization of such international conferences as that on peace, security, democracy and

development in the Great Lakes region which took place in Dar es-Salaam in November 2004; greater cooperation in decision-making between the Security Council and regional organizations; the tireless efforts of peacekeeping missions in the region; the assistance of donor countries; and the ongoing monitoring by non-governmental organizations of human rights violations committed by the parties to conflicts, as well as of the need for humanitarian assistance. Equally essential has been the will of the peoples of the region to opt for democratic and inclusive solutions.

We do not believe that acts of the past must inevitably be repeated in the future. Structural changes, such as coordinated assistance in the creation of stable institutions, the reconstruction and development of countries during the post-conflict period — inter alia, by the recently established Peacebuilding Commission — and an end to impunity at the national level for violators of human rights and humanitarian law, or at the supranational level by the constitution of international tribunals or by the action of the International Criminal Court, may generate the necessary incentives to reduce the recurrence of conflicts in the region. Once a peace accord has been reached, structural change may be an effective tool to guarantee peace and stability.

In our opinion, the granting of amnesty for grave violations of human rights as a strategy to end a conflict has not had positive long-term results, since the combating parties rarely put down their weapons, while lasting peace cannot be reached without reconciliation within society. Only by bringing to justice all violators of human rights and international humanitarian law will it be possible to end the culture of impunity, thus promoting a solid starting point for long-term stability for the countries of the region.

Argentina is committed to the defence of those values and principles and therefore supports the draft resolution prepared by the Tanzanian delegation.

Finally, and in accordance with the Secretary-General's recommendations in his report, my delegation reiterates here its message of support for the timely convening of the second International Conference on Peace, Security, Democracy and Development in the Great Lakes Region of Africa, to be held in Nairobi, Kenya, with a view to adopting a pact on security, stability and development to ensure a future of peace and sustained progress in the region.

Mr. Oshima (Japan): My delegation wishes to thank you, Madam, and the delegation of Tanzania for your timely initiative of convening this debate and especially appreciates the fact that you are presiding over it. We recall the significant achievements to date, including the Dar es-Salaam Declaration adopted at the first summit of the Great Lakes Conference in 2004, in which Japan participated. We are pleased that, through the processes following the Conference, a framework has been established and gradually strengthened to effectively address the key challenges facing the countries of the Great Lakes region. Today's meeting is particularly timely in order to accelerate the momentum towards further concrete outcomes.

In its resolutions 1625 (2205) and 1631 (2005), the Security Council has provided guidance regarding conflict prevention in Africa and cooperation with regional organizations in dealing with conflicts. Today's meeting provides an important opportunity to discuss the implementation of those resolutions in the specific context of a region rife with conflicts, but also holding the promise of the resolution of conflict and peacebuilding.

In this debate, I would like to focus on the issues of armed groups, the framework for regional cooperation and Japan's efforts for the region.

We commend the encouraging progress made in the peace processes in Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I would like to convey our sincere appreciation to Foreign Minister Batumubwira of Burundi and Foreign Minister Ramazani Baya of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, who spoke earlier, for the efforts of their respective Governments. At the same time, we commend the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) and the United Nations Operation in Burundi for their valuable support to the two countries.

However, armed groups continue to pose a serious threat to security and the nascent democratic processes in the form of the continuing resistance of the Forces nationales de libération in Burundi and foreign armed groups and local militias in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The recent tragic incident in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which involved the killing of MONUC peacekeepers by suspected Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) soldiers, and the attacks launched by rebels in the North Kivu

region show yet again how dangerously fragile the situation remains.

The threat posed by armed groups is not confined within the borders of one country, but is already regional in dimension and as such is fast becoming more potent. That makes it imperative that, if it is to be effective in dealing with those armed groups, greater cooperation among the countries in the region be put in place. For example, while MONUC is providing assistance to the Democratic Republic of the Congo in implementing the disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation of armed combatants, the cooperation of neighbouring Rwanda and Burundi in tackling that issue is also critically important. To deal effectively with the menace posed by the LRA, there should be closer cooperation among the countries in which that group is operating actively.

In addition, in the context of the LRA issue, we hope that the Government of Uganda will further strengthen its efforts to improve the security and humanitarian situation in the northern part of the country.

While the issue of armed groups is serious and requires urgent measures, there are other equally pressing problems for which cooperation among the countries in the Great Lakes region must also be strengthened. Thus, the countries of the region are expected to intensify their own efforts to build mutual confidence, which will enable them to address issues of common interest by expanding the framework of cooperation in the humanitarian areas, such as the return of refugees and in the management and control of natural resources.

Japan's approach to cooperation with African States in matters of conflict resolution and peacebuilding, as well as in development cooperation, is to respect and encourage ownership of the process and the outcomes by the African countries themselves. Where there is a lack of such ownership, there is little chance of a reliable and sustainable outcome.

It is our belief that this principle of ownership should apply not only to the efforts of individual States but also to cooperative regional efforts. The International Conference on the Great Lakes Region is a forum that should foster this sense of both individual and regional ownership in resolving problems and promoting mutual confidence and regional resiliency. We expect that the members of the core group of the Conference will work for peace, the consolidation of peace, peacebuilding and development in the region, in cooperation with, and with the support of, the Group of Friends, which includes international partners, United Nations agencies and the African Union.

Japan's key framework of cooperation with Africa is the well established Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD), which we have been conducting for more than a decade. A fourth full-fledged TICAD conference is to be held in 2008. Through this process we have identified three pillars for development cooperation with Africa: first, human-centred development, secondly, poverty reduction through economic growth, and thirdly, consolidation of peace efforts. Within that framework, my Government has implemented assistance for the Great Lakes region in the areas of elections, food, refugees, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) and community development, and it intends to continue its assistance efforts. In addition, within the TICAD framework, my Government will shortly be hosting a conference in Addis Ababa, on 16 and 17 February, on the topic of consolidation of peace in Africa, focusing on issues such as DDR, small arms, security-sector reform, governance and recovery. At that conference we will share experiences gained on these issues elsewhere and examine ways of assisting African countries in addressing these questions. It is our hope that many leaders and interested individuals and organizations from Africa and outside Africa will participate and that the exercise will serve also as a useful contribution to building momentum towards the next International Conference on the Great Lakes Region.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate our hope for the early convening of the second International Conference on the Great Lakes Region. We also look forward to the efforts of the countries of the region to move the process forward through the exercise of their ownership, with the support and assistance of the United Nations and the international donor community. Japan will be pleased to continue to be associated with this important conference process.

Finally, I thank the delegation of Tanzania for its work in finalizing a draft resolution on this matter (S/2006/51), which we fully support.

Sir Emyr Jones Parry (United Kingdom): Madam President, your presence honours the Council

and testifies to Tanzania's commitment to security, peace and development in the Great Lakes region.

I should like to associate the United Kingdom fully with the statement delivered earlier in this debate by my Austrian colleague on behalf of the current presidency of the European Union.

I should also like to convey the sincere condolences of the British Government to the families of the Guatemalan peacekeepers killed in action on 23 January. We wish those who were injured a speedy and full recovery and express our admiration and gratitude to the Government and the people of Guatemala for the service, in most difficult circumstances, that their armed forces are performing on behalf of the United Nations and in the pursuit of peace and stability for the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Those responsible for the peacekeepers' deaths must be tracked down and brought to justice.

The brutality and chaos that illegal armed groups such as the Lord's Resistance Army, the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda and the Forces nationales de liberation have inflicted on innocent civilians in the Great Lakes region must be stopped. We strongly support the robust role being played by the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo in support of the Congolese armed forces in operations against those armed groups.

Military operations need to be accompanied by close cooperation among the Governments concerned to cope with armed groups, which respect no borders. We urge those Governments to work together, and to work with the United Nations, to take the steps necessary to better protect their own civilians, including by disarming the militias, by bringing those responsible for violence and human rights abuses to justice and by improving border security to prevent the illegal flow of the arms and natural resources that are the lifeblood of those armed groups.

The international community has an important supportive part to play. The British Government is fully committed to working with the Governments of the region towards long-term peace and stability in the Great Lakes region. Bilaterally and through the European Union, we are providing assistance for humanitarian relief and security-sector reform, and in those areas where peace has taken root we are providing support for social and economic development.

The international community can also help to neutralize the activities of the armed groups by enforcing the Democratic Republic of the Congo arms embargo and the targeted measures imposed on those that violate the embargo. We look forward, therefore, to the integrated and comprehensive strategy that the Secretary-General has been asked to prepare, in consultation with the Governments concerned and with other key stakeholders, on all aspects of resolving the issue of illegal armed groups in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The deaths of the Guatemalan peacekeepers have tragically highlighted the devastating influence that the Lord's Resistance Army continues to have on the Great Lakes region. Its activities illustrate the interconnectedness of the problem: a brutal insurgency launched in one country spreads across borders and infects two neighbouring countries. In each case, countless innocent civilians are killed, abducted or displaced: there are 1.2 million displaced persons today. It is right that we, the international community, should do whatever we can to help the Governments concerned — the Government of Uganda, but also the Governments of the Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo — to protect their civilians and to deal with a threat that is undermining regional peace and security. The United Nations missions in the region and entities such as the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs have an important role to play, a role which we believe should be reinforced: first by identifying ways in which the international community can assist, and secondly by providing that assistance wherever possible. We therefore welcome the request to the Secretary-General in the draft resolution (S/2006/51) to be adopted at the end of this meeting to make recommendations to the Security Council in that regard.

Dealing with the activities of illegal armed groups is one challenge to the transition process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. There are, of course, others. The positive results of the constitutional referendum in December declared and showed the desire of the Congolese people to complete the transition to full democratic government. We urge the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to rise to the expectations of its people, to maintain the

momentum of the political process and to ensure that the envisaged timetable for elections before 30 June 2006 can be met. In parallel, faster progress is needed to reform the security sector and to bring an end to corruption and impunity. The international community stands ready to assist.

Today is also an occasion to salute the achievement of the Burundian people in successfully completing their transition. We stand ready to support the new Government of Burundi as it establishes itself and develops its policies. Our shared interests are best served, we believe, if the disengagement and drawdown of the United Nations Operation in Burundi (ONUB) are gradual. We welcome the detailed work that is being done on that by ONUB in consultation with the Government of Burundi, and we recommend drawing on experience gained, for example, in the successful transitions under way, and being achieved, in East Timor and Sierra Leone.

Finally, we note the relevance to today's discussion of the recently established Peacebuilding Commission, and we salute the central role that Tanzania and Denmark both played in the establishment of the Commission and that they will both play as founding members of the Peacebuilding Commission, selected by the Security Council. The Commission will have an important role to play in providing advice on how States in the Great Lakes region and beyond can complete the transition from peacekeeping to sustainable reconstruction, institution-building, the rule of law and development.

We very much welcome the text of the draft resolution, which the United Kingdom will be proud to support.

The President: There are still a number of speakers remaining on my list for this meeting. I intend, with the concurrence of the members of the Council, to suspend the meeting until 3 p.m.

The meeting was suspended at 1.10 p.m.